

# critical digest

139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY  
EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus



April 11, 1956 Vol VIII No 8

The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter \$25 year \$6.50 quarter

## This Week

The Mother of Us All-  
Phoenix 4/16 & 4/23. Vir-  
gil Thomson opera of St-  
ein story. Staged by Bill  
Butler. A Phoenix Side-  
Show.

## Next Week

Eastward of Eden-  
Actors Playhouse 4/17...  
King & I-City Center 4/18  
... Waiting for Godot-  
Golden 4/19

## Road Yankees

National company of  
Damn Yankees starring  
Bobby Clark as the devil  
was rated as excellent by  
Atkinson, Times, who view-  
ed it in Washington. D. C.  
Minor complaint was fil-  
ed against touring orches-  
tra which lacked some of  
the sparkle and electricity  
of the original.

## Interview Hi-Lite

Richard adler has  
decided to continue writ-  
ing alone, he told Peper,  
World Telegram & Sun.  
Though he did no writing  
for 6 months after the  
death of his partner Jerry  
Ross, the co-author of Damn  
Yankees is working on a  
musical version of Ghost  
Goes West."

## Digests of Current NYC Theatre Reviews

A Month in the Country- Phoenix- 4/3... All but two re-  
viewers found Michael Redgrave's production of Turgenev  
play enjoyable. Everyone associated with it is in top form,  
summed up Atkinson, Times, for the majority. This included  
leading players Luther Adler, Uta Hagen, Alexander Scourby,  
sets by Klaus Holm, costumes by Alvin Colt, etc. Thoroughly  
beguiling, added Kerr, Herald Tribune, Coleman, Mirror, rat-  
ed production one of the most rewarding yet, and only wonder-  
ed why author has been neglected since 1930. Brilliant cast,  
plus Redgrave's direction result in a stirring performance,  
agreed McClain, Journal American. Dissenters were Watt,  
News, and Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Both found some  
find acting, but feared that play had too many dull moments.

Affair of Honor- Barrymore 4/6... Theatre Guild &  
Theatre 200 production of Bill Hoffman's costume comedy  
was unanimously panned by aisle-sitters. Several thought  
Dennis King's brilliant comedy style almost saved the play,  
but none recommended play as anything but a bore. Dull  
and idious, concluded Times man. A real dog, noted Herald  
Tribune aisle-sitter. Coleman, Mirror, billed King as a hil-  
arious hit in a well meaning miss. It is too much to expect  
of actors that they should save so feeble an antic, commented  
Watts, Post. McClain, Journal American, was stumped to un-  
derstand why Theatre Guild and/or Dennis King should be  
trapped in anything in such bad taste.

Antigone- Carnegie Hall Playhouse 4/2... Split notices  
received by first production of Mazda Productions at new  
playhouse. Mirror, Post, and World Telegram & Sun critics  
approved production of Anouilh's 1943 script as well done.  
While Times, Herald Tribune and Journal American thought it  
was poorly done. Times and Herald Tribune appraisers com-  
plained that they could not hear actors. On the other side,  
Watts, Post, labeled it a sound revival of an arresting play.  
Nancy Marchand in the title role, critic added, plays with  
force, authority and believably fanatical forthrightness. Cole-  
man, Mirror, added that Henry Weinstein directed it with a  
sure hand.

The Council of Stock Theatres plans to file charges against Actors Equity with the National Labor Relations Board. The summer theatre managers charge the actors union with failure to recognize them and failure to negotiate an agreement with them. The group say the union did not inform them of the new 3 division summer salary minimums for different size houses. Group represents 24 houses that employ stars.

#### PLAYS

Tiger at the Gates closed... My Fair Lady receiving 2500 to 4000 mail orders per day... Mrs. Lemuel Ayers will produce The Immaculate Adventure next season... Roger Stevens plans to name one of the proposed Lincoln Square new theatres after Robert E. Sherwood.

#### PLAYERS

John Burrell resigned from American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and Academy over a policy dispute... Jan Sherwood replaced Hildegard Neff, Silk Stockings... Claudette Colbert replaced Margaret Sullivan, Janus... Igor Cassini states that he does not want to be billed as co-producer of Strip for Action... Constance Brigham signed as standby for Julie Andrews, My Fair Lady... Kitty Carlisle to play title role of City Center's Kiss Me Kate... Leon Janney moved from Three Penny Opera to Silk Stockings... Bibi Osterwald replaced Elaine Stritch, Bus Stop... Shelia Bond to sub for Gwen Verdon, Damn Yankee in June.

#### LEGAL DEPT.

Strip for Action producers are being sued for \$44,600 by Irving Elman, a writer who contends he was hired to help with the show and was then fired. Show posted bond after being served with "write of attachment"... Eddie Dowling is being sued by Patrick Mahony for \$200,000. Mahony claims producers "stole" an investor interested in his play and persuaded him to present Righteous Are Bold instead... Lucille Lortel informs that she owns Theatre de Lys, and that decision refers to a 3 year lease.

#### OTHER BROADWAYS

Los Angeles' long-run Turnabout Theatre closed after 4356 performances, the resident troupe opens in San Francisco May 15... A non-profit foundation has been formed to operate Buffalo, NY, Erlanger Theatre.

#### THEATRE TV & RADIO NOTES

Rehearsals scenes from Shangri-La will be presented on NBC TV Wide-World April 15... Lamb's Gambol will be presented on NBC TV April 21... Noel Coward's The Happy Breed will be presented on CBS TV May 5... Victor Borge has set June 14 for his CBS TV show... Edwin Lester's West Coast stage version of Rosalinda with Cyril Ritchard will be presented on NBC TV July 23... Bloomer Girl will be presented without stars on NBC TV in May.

#### AWARD FILE

George Freedley, curator of the NY Public Library Theatre Collection, won "The Kelcey Allen Memorial Award" for distinguished service to the American stage.

#### THEATRE AD NOTES

Waiting for Godot ads state "This is a play for the thoughtful and discriminating theatre goer. We are, therefore, offering it for a limited engagement of only 4 weeks. I respectfully suggest that those who come to the theatre for casual entertainment do not buy a ticket for this attraction. Michael Myerberg."

#### THEATRE RECORD NOTES

15 recordings of songs from The Most Happy Fella have been recorded already. Original cast disc rights have not yet been signed... RCA Victor has issued album of Richard III with Laurence Olivier.





GREEN  
ROOM  
DEPARTMENT

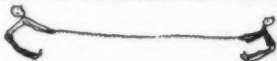
**PRO HIGHER PRICES...** The trend toward higher theatre prices is not only justified, but forced on the theatre producer, My Fair Lady producer Herman Levin explains to Sobol, Journal American. The theatre cannot charge depression prices and be forced to pay for goods and services in the inflated market of 1956, states Levin. Since 1944 statistics show theatrical wage costs have risen 175%, advertising rates 70%. But columnist disagrees that ticket prices have not risen in 20 years. Sobol recalls that in 1927 Broadway cost \$3.85, Rio Rita \$5.

**COLUMN TIPS...** Theatre Guild may resign from American Theatre Wing because Time Limit was not considered for a "Tony"... Thornton Wilder is "unofficial understudy" for The Matchmaker cast... William Saroyan haunting 57th St Automat making notes for his next play, hears Kilgallen.

**ADD POLITE MEN...** Most Polite Box Office Man nominations received by O'Connor, Journal American, include Gordon Cramer, Alvin, and Tommy Brotherton and Marie Tickson, both of Playhouse.

**DRAMA MAILBOX...** No other business complains about the lack of customers and then abuses them like the theatre, notes Times reader who had check for My Fair Lady returned two months after writing for tickets... Theatre East producers were saluted as first and so-far only theatre-folk interested in building new theatres in NYC by a C.D. subscriber. Less talk and more theatres was suggested.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...** Earle Hyman, Mister Johnson, was rated by Watts, Post, as one of the finer young actors in theatre today... Theatres that sell box-seats with 20-40 vision of half the stage should install mirrors to aid ticket buyers, suggests McHarry, News... Whenever Chapman, News, begins to think that the theatre should and can do better, he banishes this discouragement by tuning in a popular TV program. The aim of all these TV shows are ordinariness in all departments.



PROS & CONS BY T.M.K

Affair of Honor has no merits except the built-in style of Dennis King's language. As if the dull writing, dull acting and dull direction were not bad enough, the "comedy" is guilty of the sin of taking itself seriously as "American History."

Tragic accident in NY fire which killed 6 NYC fireman should make every theatre goer and theatre owner( On & Off Broadway) question the safety of the current houses. In spite of the licenses granted many houses( On & Off Broadway) are fire-traps.



# OFF BROADWAY

The Man With the Golden Arm, adapted by Jack Kirkland will be presented at Cherry Lane May 20 by Macmillan, Blum and Morrison... Phoenix plans to open next season with Saint Joan Sept 4 starring Siobham McKenna... The Lower Depths to be presented by Contemporary Theatre, 15 Second Av. ... Uncle Vanya tickets on sale to July 1 at 4th St... Eastward of Eden by Dorothy Gardner to open at Actors Playhouse April 17... The Beaver Coat to close April 14 at Greenwich Mews, next show to be Ibsen's Doll's House.

Lotte Lenya will leave Three Penny Opera later this month, Grete Mosheim will replace her... Scenes from Back to Methuselah will be presented at Open Stage April 16

Plough and the Stars presented by Craftsman at Barbizon Plaza was rated as a competent reading of the O'Casey play by Calta, Times, and Herridge, Post. But neither thought it a worthwhile production of the classic Irish play. Former reviewer thought Lionel Stander's performance the best, while Post editor liked Tom Clancy's the best.

Anna Lucasta presented at Temple Theatre, 242 E 14 by William Gyimes was rated as a production that could be, with a bit more rehearsing, an entertaining one. Negro cast members and direct or toured England in show.

Norwegian star Tore Segelcke opened her nationwide one woman tour at Town Hall. Atkinson, Times, admitted that though dramatic readings are hardly more than classroom exercises, Mme Segelcke is an artist of first rank and her program left an impression of great spirituality.

# THEATRE RECORD COMMENTS

My Fair Lady original cast disc (Columbia) is an accoustical triumph, raved Gros, Variety. Disc show score as an integrated, exp't job. The tunes never wear out and in several instances take on new stature with rehearing.

"An Evening With Beatrice Lillie" disc (London) includes some of her more choice routines, and also some of her lesser ones, reports Wilson, Times... Nancy Walker's disc of "I Can Cook Too" (Dolphin) was also recommended by Times reviewer.

# TV THEATRE COMMENTS



Barrets of Wimpole Street on NBC-TV marked Katharine Cornell's debut on TV. Critics applauded stage star and, for the most part, the play. Only Gould, Times, felt script was dated.

"Twentieth Century" on CBS TV with Orson Welles and Betty Grable was cheered by TV reviewers as a fast, funny farce, not hurt by the years. 1932 comedy still abounds in juice and vitality, summed up Gross, News.

## For Stage Struck Only

\*Weekly NYC Theatre newsletter 8th year. Perfect gift for stage struck 52 weeks year. \$25 year. \$6.50 quarter. Gift Card included.

CRITICAL DIGEST-139 E 47, NYC-

